

Sunday, July 5, 2009—Praying the Powerful Prayers of Paul—A Prayer to be Filled with the Knowledge of His Will—Colossians 1:9-14

Introduction

- This morning we are going to begin studying a lengthy prayer in Colossians chapter one.
- Those of you who took a copy of *The Index of Pauline Prayer* when we began this series of studies know that there are many more prayers recorded throughout Paul's epistles than the five or six we have looked at in this series of studies. However, the Prayers we have looked at are Power Prayers because they cover 95% of the information covered in the multiple smaller prayers peppered throughout Paul's letters.
- This prayer in Colossians 1 is extremely important because it deals with the important issue of knowing and doing the will of God. About a year ago as we were finished up our series of studies through the book of Colossians I taught three messages on how to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Colossians 4:12).
- We are going to be revisiting much of that information as we study through this prayer in Colossians 1. We have many new people with us who have not had the benefit of hearing this information.

Overview of Prayer

- Since the day Paul heard of their love in the Spirit in verse 8 he did not cease to pray for the Colossians that they might:
 - be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding
 - walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing
 - be fruitful in every good work
 - increasing in the knowledge of God
 - strengthened with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness
 - giving thanks unto the father

Colossians 1:9

- This verse is the key to the entire prayer. Everything that Paul prays on behalf of the Colossians steams and flows out of verse 9.

- From the day Paul heard from Epaphras about the Colossians' love in the Spirit (verses 7-8) he has not stopped praying and desiring that the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.
- Filled—this word carries the following meanings:
 - to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full
 - to render full, i.e. to complete
 - to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim
 - to make complete in every particular, to render perfect
- The word translated “filled” in Colossians 1:9 is that same word that is translated “complete” in Colossians 4:12. To stand complete means that nothing else is needed.
 - Matthew 1:22, 2:15
 - Matthew 2:15—when a prophecy is fulfilled it is completed, there is nothing left that needs to occur.
 - Colossians 2:10—we are complete in Christ, there is nothing we need that hasn't already been given to us freely by Jesus Christ.
- Therefore, it is Paul's prayer on behalf of the Colossians that they might be filled to capacity with a complete knowledge of God's will for them.
- Throughout this series we have already studied a lot of things about knowledge:
 - Ephesians 1:17-18—spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him
 - eyes of your understanding be enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of his calling
 - Ephesians 3:16-21—know the love of Christ
 - Philippians 1:9—your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.
- Colossians 1:9—what is it that Paul wants to Colossians to be filled with? A knowledge of God's will.
- This knowledge of God's will is going to come through and stem from wisdom and spiritual understanding.

- Wisdom—we have already seen through this series of studies that when Paul mentions wisdom he is speaking about the wisdom of God in a mystery regarding God’s secret purpose in forming the Body of Christ.
- Understanding—once again understanding comes through knowledge. You cannot separate the one from the other.
 - Ephesians 2:4—my knowledge
 - Colossians 2:2—there is no excuse for ignorance in Paul’s writings.
- Paul’s prayer is that through wisdom and spiritual understanding the Colossians would be filled to capacity with the knowledge of what God is doing.
- God’s will for humanity has already been revealed on the pages of Scripture. It is not something that we are charged with going out and discerning by reading the circumstances of our lives rather it’s something the believer has the capacity to be filled with the knowledge of as well as stand perfect and complete in based upon a sound understanding of God’s Word rightly divided.

Modern Teaching on the Will of God

- Everyone wants to know the will of God for their life. As a result, there are all sorts of formulas that have been articulated in order to discern the Will of God.
- Popular Idea 1: One notion teaches that God has a general and specific will for each believer.
 - General: to be a Christian, serve God, not steal, lie, etc.
 - Specific: who to marry, where to work, what car to buy, which job or career to take, what church to go to, ect.
- Popular Idea 2: God has a detailed life plan uniquely designed for every believer revealed through outward circumstance and inward impressions.
- Typical 3-Step Formula:
 - Read the Word of God and Pray
 - Read the Circumstances of Your Life, The Road Signs, Opening and Closing of Doors and Windows

- Listen for God's still small voice, inner voice, or inner feelings, promptings, hunches, and impressions.
 - According to the prevalent teaching the result of this process will lead you right to center of God's will.
- Colossians 1:25—If you are functioning like this in your relationship with God you are asking him to do something he already told you he wouldn't, reveal things to you.
 - God's revelation to mankind ceased with the completion of the Word of God. To ask God to communicate with you apart from his word is to expect extra-Biblical revelation.
 - Believers need to stop allowing dishonest men to high jack their faith. The only way you know you have received a message from the God of Heaven is through an objective standard outside of yourself.

God's Will is in His Word

- Believers need to stop and realize that God's will is not first focused on us but on God and what he is doing.
- If you want to do the will of God find out what God is doing. Do that and you will be doing the will of God.
- How do you find out what God is doing? The word of God rightly divided tells us what God is doing. He is forming the church the Body of Christ.
- Ephesians 1:9—through the revelation of the mystery God has revealed the mystery of his will. There not one single piece of God's will that he has not already make known to mankind.
- Ephesians 2:13-18
- Ephesians 5:15-17—once again the will of God is to be understood and acted upon and not sought after.
- Ephesians 4:22-32
- I Thessalonians 4:3-5

- I Thessalonians 5:16-23—there are plenty of things to occupy my time and attention without asking God for more revelation.
- Romans 12:1-2—as we have seen over the past couple weeks it based upon knowledge that we exercise judgment that allows us to prove that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- Circumstances are the context or the stage upon which we live our lives. We are to act upon that stage based on God’s written revealed will. Next week I am going to demonstrate to you from the word of God that circumstances have never been a method God used to reveal his will that has always been the job of the Word of God.